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Redevelopment Board Minutes 08/23/2010

Minutes of Monday, August 23, 2010
Arlington Redevelopment Board
Second Floor Conference Room, Town Hall Annex
Approved September 13, 2010

Members Present:
Roland Chaput
Bruce Fitzsimmons
Chris Loreti, Chairman
Ed Tsoi

Several members of the public were also present.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

The Chairman re-opened the hearing for 30-50 Mill Street.

Materials considered by the Board: Allen & Major 30-50 Mill Street 8-17-10 Proposed Color Presentation Plan CPP-1, Proposed Landscape Plan C-6a, Parking Area Landscape Exhibit EXH-1, Open Space-Landscaped Exhibit EXH-2, Open Space-Usable Exhibit EXH-3, Shattuck Ace Hardware Store Parking Exhibit EXH-4, Memorandum from WP East Development Enterprises LLC August 18, 2010, Letter from Allen & Major to Rick Dickason re. access drive over the Mill Brook, August 18, 2010, letter from William Scully, P.E., New England Engineering Group to Christopher Loreti, August 23, 2010. All available for view in the Department of Planning & Community Development, Town Hall Annex.

The Chairman announced that the meeting would be recorded for cable television and for a Redevelopment Board Member, Andrew West, who was traveling out of the country on business. The vote on a Special Permit requires at least 4 of a 5 member Board for approval, he added. The Chairman explained that 2007 Town Meeting adopted a version of the "Mullin Rule", allowing municipal permit-granting board member to miss a single meeting and still vote.

Mr. Loreti explained that Board members would interact with the applicant for 30-50 Mill Street for the continued hearing first, and then he would recognize members of the public who wished to comment. The Chair then asked the Board to identify any further information the members had expected. The model, the stormwater treatment details, plans for parking on-site by Arlington High School or the 22 Mill Street office condos, and Transportation Demand Management were cited by the Board. Tim Williams of Allen & Major replied for the applicant that he had responded to the Town Engineer's July 30 memorandum and had met on-site with the Town's Licensed Site Professional (LSP). He added that contamination on the high school site remains to be addressed. Mary Winstanley O'Connor commented that on-site parking would be addressed later that evening. Mr. Loreti said that the focus this evening would be primarily on the site plan.

The Board then briefly discussed the EDR standard of whether the use was desirable or essential to the public. The Board concurred that housing was a desirable use. The Board considered the EDR criterion of relation of building to environment.

Architect Brian O'Connor then presented the shadow study, expanded height sections within the neighborhood context, and aerial photos. In discussion, Mr. Tsoi commented that the rear wall was too tall and too ugly. Architect Brian O'Connor agreed, saying they may use an applied coating or stone facing. The discussion then turned to how the Floor Area Ratio was calculated. The applicant was asked for further detail on how the FAR was calculated, and the applicant agreed to provide this at the next hearing session. Mr. Loreti asked Planning Department staff to review how and whether similar garages in other complexes receiving special permits, such as 47 Mystic Street, were included in the FAR. The calculation of usable open space was questioned. Wetlands should not be included in useable open space, the Board observed. Mr. Williams commented that the legend was incorrect, and that the stormwater swale was not included in open space total.

The Board asked if the retail building was further advanced in design. That would be provided in the near future, the applicant responded.

The Board then discussed traffic and circulation criteria. The Board asked about parking on-site. To address parking, Ms. Winstanley O'Connor introduced Bill Scully from New England Engineering. She said that the project needs 153 spaces for residential needs, and 12 for retail needs. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor commented that it was not feasible to allow parking for Arlington High School events on the site because these events would conflict with the highest use period by the residents. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor turned to Bill Scully. He handed out a letter addressed to the Chair dated August 23, 2010 regarding on-site shared parking and pedestrian safety. The letter concluded that there could be shared parking use with 22 Mill Street. The Board asked whether the spaces would be assigned, and Mr. Scully agreed that they could be. The Board asked whether access to the garage could be one way flow to avoid the traffic conflicts described by Dr. Fitzpatrick at a prior meeting. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor said that they would look into that possibility. The Board also asked the applicant for more information on bicycle storage. Mr. Loreti noted that there would be fourteen additional parking spaces leased back to 22 Mill Street. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor added that there would be no Arlington High School parking at any time. Mr. Loreti asked why so much parking was being requested if the development was so close to public transportation. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor replied that everyone has a car, and Mr. Rick Dickason added that providing too little parking could upset the marketability of the units. Mr. Loreti asked Planning Staff to report to the Board on how many parking spaces per unit were approved in the Special Permit for the Legacy apartments. Board members commented that the trend is to drive less, providing extra spaces works against that.

Mr. Loreti then asked the applicants to review the Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee memorandum and address it at the next meeting along with providing their presentation on transportation impacts. He added that a peer review would then follow. Mr. Fitzsimmons asked that they also address the points of traffic conflict identified earlier, along with traffic and safety at the bikepath crossing on Mill Street. Mr. Loreti asked Jeff Maxtutis of TAC for any recommendations on how the analysis is done. Mr. Maxtutis asked for the total parking demand for 22 Mill Street. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor replied that it was 38 spaces. Brigham's leased 38 to 22 Mill Street. Mr. Maxtutis said that Mr. Scully could meet with TAC. Mr. Loreti and the Board had no objections, asking that site access be included in their discussion.

Mr. Loreti then asked for public comment. Bob Radochia, Columbia Road, asked if the parking requirements were the same whether for condominiums or rental apartments. The response was yes. Ann LeRoyer, Mill Brook Task Force asked for the proponents' intentions for how the Town-owned pocket park may be integrated into the site plan. Mr. Williams said that the structural engineers looked at the culvert, and that it was sound and in good condition. He cited an August 18, 2010 letter from engineer Mike Guilmet. Mr. Williams added that work on the pocket park requires a Notice of Intent, and the Town would have to be the applicant, to remove a sliver of asphalt that is on the Town-owned land, and which otherwise would remain after the landscaping and site work is completed. There was discussion over jurisdiction. Alan McClennen, Jr. commented that the School Committee has jurisdiction. Mr. Loreti asked Ms. Kowalski to contact School Committee Chair Joe Curro.

Attorney Joseph McDermott identified himself as the attorney for the unit owners at 22 Mill Street, saying that parking was of utmost urgency for 22 Mill Street. He said this was different than the Legacy apartments, since 22 Mill Street is the biggest medical office facility in Arlington. Mr. Fitzsimmons stated that zip car and other Transportation Demand Management techniques will affect residential parking demand on-site.

Mr. Loreti asked the Board for any further direction to the applicants. Mr. Chaput asked for more detail on stormwater management. The hearing was then continued to September 13, from 8:00pm to 9:00pm only, since other hearings were scheduled that night. Mr. Loreti said that there would be no traffic discussion on September 13 since this subject required ample time and it was not clear that the applicant would be ready at that time. Stormwater, landscaping, open space, utilities, and electrical services would be the focus on September 13.

David Berry then appeared before the Board to address three related agenda items related to property under the Board's jurisdiction.

The Board then turned to a lease amendment at the Gibbs School. Since the Board had recently been informed it did not have authority over non-urban renewal buildings, the Board did not discuss this item, but instead received a draft letter to Town Counsel prepared by Mr. Fitzsimmons citing case law that would support the Board's authority to continue to hold and lease municipal property under specific conditions. Mr. Fitzsimmons had called Town Counsel, and would communicate with her when she returned from vacation. Board members would review the draft and provide their comments to Mr. Fitzsimmons at the next meeting. This subject would be on the September 13 agenda, the Board decided.

The Board asked how the Recreation Department got behind in rent, and asked whether other tenants were behind. Mr. Berry then discussed with the Board the request for additional free space for Mystic River Watershed Association and relocating the Town's Building Craftsman's office. The Board asked Mr. Berry to discuss payments with Mystic River Watershed Association and to go through the political process for the subsidy. Mr. Berry then discussed capital budget requests for several ARB buildings and the Board concurred with his requests.

The Board then discussed the Symmes project, agreeing that a conference call with the owner, James Duncan and the banker, Liz Paulson. Ms. Kowalski reported on her communication with Town Counsel regarding seeking outside counsel on whether today's affordable housing bylaw would apply to amendments to the Special Permit, and to a new Special Permit.

The Board then discussed the vehicle circulation issue at the 140 Mystic Gulf Station. Ms. Kowalski had not yet heard back from Cumberland Gulf. She offered to talk with someone on the site. The Board asked her to look for a site circulation plan in the file, and to look at prior and current Special Permit conditions.

The Board discussed the walk-through of CVS and agreed that the Director would go on the walk-through. Ms. Winstanley O'Connor reported that the Atwood House would be painted in early September.

The Board then discussed the July 26 minutes and Mr. Chaput then moved to approve the amendments to them. Mr. Tsoi seconded and the Board voted approval.

The Board then turned to correspondence received. Mr. Fitzsimmons said that his concerns were addressed regarding non-accessory advertising on the proposed CEMUSA bus shelters by the letter from Town Counsel. On a motion made and seconded, the Board then voted to approve correspondence received.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Kowalski
Secretary ex officio